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**NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION JULY MEETING**

**July Meeting.** The Natural Resource Commission met on July 13, 2017, in Des Moines. Senator Tom Shipley was in attendance.

**Director's Comments.** Director Chuck Gipp explained that eight people were laid off on July 5, 2017, due to the \$1.6 million reduction of the FY 2018 General Fund appropriation for the operations of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). In addition to the General Fund appropriation decrease, the DNR will also have increased expenditures for salary adjustments. The reduction of staff included:

- The State Forester position and the Forestry Bureau were eliminated. The employees that work in field offices will be transferred to the Wildlife Bureau, and the State Forests and related employees will be transferred to the Parks Bureau.
- The State Geologist position was eliminated and the DNR will contract with the University of Iowa for geological services.
- The AmeriCorps Volunteer Coordinator position was eliminated. AmeriCorps is a federal program that is not included in President Trump's proposed federal budget.
- Other positions eliminated included the Animal Feeding Operations Coordinator, the Safety Manager, the Art Director of the DNR magazine, and two positions that were assigned to recreational trails.

**Parks to People.** A presentation was made by the Parks Foundation for the Parks to People Initiative. The pilot project for the Initiative is the Grant Wood Mississippi River Region Loop that will be created in Jackson, Jones, and Dubuque counties. The Grant Wood Loop includes a number of items that focus on the development of parks, cultural projects, and capital projects. The Grant Wood Loop Project was awarded \$1.9 million from the State, with total project cost estimated at \$21.3 million. In addition to the \$1.9 million appropriation, \$14.5 million in matching funds has been secured and \$4.9 million is still needed. Additional information is available at the Grant Wood Loop [website](#).

**Adams County Conservation Board.** Members of the County Conservation Board provided information to the Commission related to the transfer of five acres of land owned by the DNR at the Lake Icaria Wildlife Management Area. The Wildlife Management Area has a total of 1,945 acres and the Conservation Board manages 818 acres, providing activities such as boating, camping, and swimming. There are also cabins available to rent. The DNR manages 1,127 acres of the wildlife area for waterfowl and upland habitat. The Board wants to build a lodge or conference center that would provide additional lodging, meeting areas, and other services. The Commission requested additional information but did not make any decisions during the meeting.

**Public Land.** The following land acquisition projects were approved by the Commission:

- A conservation easement on 26.5 acres of land from the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. The permanent easement is in the northeast corner of Allamakee County near the Iverson Bottoms Wildlife Management Area. The easement allows public access for fishing along Bear Creek. The purchase price was \$112,000 and funding was from the Fish Restitution Fund.
- A donation of 2.1 acres in the Red Rock Wildlife Management Area in Warren County.
- The purchase of 11.6 acres in northeast Clayton County, including 8.3 acres of timber and a small prairie for goats. The land will provide access to a portion of the Bloody Run Wildlife Management Area. The cost was \$24,500 and the funding was from Fish and Game Trust Fund.
- The exchange of 0.3 acres in Palo Alto County between the DNR and Happy Campers, LLC. In the exchange, vacant land will go to the DNR and Happy Campers will receive land that is former crop

ground. The intent is to build a bike trail that will be managed by the Palo Alto County Conservation Board.

**August Meeting.** The Commission will meet on August 9 in Polk City for a tour of the Olofson Shooting Range followed by the monthly meeting.

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